

TEPP Vendor Guidelines

Introduction

The Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP) is administered by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) and plays a key role in the PSC's fulfillment of the requirements of the State's Universal Service Fund (USF). Created by the legislature by 1993 Wisconsin Act 496 in Wis. Stat. § 196.218, the USF is designed to ensure access to the telecommunications network by all Wisconsin residents. Like other USF-funded programs, TEPP draws upon money collected from Wisconsin telephone service providers. In the case of TEPP, this money is used to help individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, speech impaired, or mobility/motion impaired purchase special equipment that will allow them access to telecommunication services.

As a vendor providing equipment to customers through TEPP, you are expected to follow certain guidelines in order to maintain the integrity of the USF. Your written agreement to abide by these guidelines is required prior to the reimbursement of any TEPP vouchers received from your company from July 1, 2004, onward.

Failure to abide by these guidelines on your part may result in disqualification from TEPP program participation. PSC reserves the right to amend these guidelines at any time.

Who Can Be a TEPP Vendor?

In order to participate in TEPP, a vendor must provide the customer with information about specialized equipment and be familiar with a variety of specialized equipment designed to help individuals with hearing, speech, or mobility/motion impairment access the telecommunications network. Vendors are expected to be knowledgeable about equipment that is available for customers in the disability categories they serve.

Any vendor meeting these requirements who is also willing to accept TEPP vouchers, abide by the guidelines listed in this document, and receive reimbursement for the equipment covered by the voucher can participate in the program.

Vendor Responsibilities

As a TEPP vendor, you are responsible for maintaining familiarity with the types of telecommunications equipment approved for purchase with a TEPP voucher as well as the special needs associated with the category of voucher submitted for reimbursement. Please contact the TEPP Administrator at (608) 274-1980 or e-mail TEPP@wipfliyoung.com if you have any questions.

When consulting with a customer, it is your responsibility to assist in identifying user needs and to identify the appropriate equipment for customers using TEPP vouchers. **The objective of TEPP is to meet user needs, not to spend the maximum dollars available on the voucher.** To that end, you must ensure that personnel in all your retail outlets or call centers working with TEPP customers understand the requirements of TEPP. Vendor personnel consulting with customers should possess adequate knowledge to advise customers on program-approved equipment designed for their specific needs.

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Eligible Equipment

Please contact the TEPP Administrator at (608) 274-1980 or TEPP@wipfliyoung.com for the current list of approved specialized telecommunications equipment for TEPP. This list is also available at tepp://psc.wi.gov/consumer/telecom/tepp/ind_t Tepp.htm.

Pre-Approval Procedures for Other Equipment

Pre-approval must be obtained from TEPP before any equipment not on the above-referenced list is sold to a program voucher holder. Pre approval must be obtained each time a request for equipment not on the list is made. All requests should be submitted in writing (preferably e-mail to TEPP@wipfliyoung.com) and must state what equipment is being proposed and why it is needed by the customer to access essential telephone service. Specific reference must be made to the individual's disability and how the requested equipment addresses his or her special needs that cannot be met by TEPP-approved equipment. This information is necessary for audit purposes.

Pre-approval requests should be made by someone who is familiar with specialized adaptive equipment for the voucher recipient's condition and who is working directly with the voucher recipient.

It is the vendor's responsibility to verify that pre-approval has been obtained. Such requests should not come to the TEPP Administrator from the customer directly.

Equipment Pricing and Shipping

Equipment sold to customers using a TEPP voucher must be provided at the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) or less. Mark-ups beyond MSRP on equipment sold to TEPP voucher users will not generally be reimbursed. On a case-by-case basis, mark-ups above MSRP may be reimbursed if very specialized equipment is purchased from a distributor that sells the equipment above wholesale price.

Where a shipping and handling charge is added to the MSRP, proof of delivery (e.g., tracking number) is required to show that the equipment was sent to the user. Only one handling charge may be reimbursed for an equipment purchase.

Marketing TEPP

Customers must be informed that they have a right to choose both the equipment they purchase and the vendor they patronize. Marketing that promotes a single product to TEPP customers undermines the objectivity that the program must maintain in order to satisfy the requirements of the USF. When consulting with a customer and before submitting an application on behalf of a customer, you must provide him or her with a list of TEPP vendors to ensure awareness of alternative telecommunication equipment sources. You must also keep on-site a copy of the completed application with the customer's signature. The PSC and the State Legislative Audit Bureau maintain the right to inspect this documentation.

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Other stipulations applicable to TEPP marketing include the following:

- Only PSC TEPP **unaltered** program applications and materials may be provided to the customer. Additional vendor promotional materials that identify the vendor and contact information must be printed separately and can be appended to the PSC TEPP material.
- Marketing materials prepared by the vendor and relating to the TEPP program must clearly indicate that the equipment eligible for purchase is made available through the Wisconsin Telecommunications Purchase Program and the Wisconsin Universal Service Fund.
- Any promotion of the TEPP-related equipment purchases must clearly indicate that the program serves eligible or qualified individuals with certain telecommunication-related special needs.

Voucher Submission Procedures When Using Medicare or Private Insurance

TEPP is “secondary” to Medicare and private insurance. If a customer using a TEPP voucher is covered by one of these, then TEPP will not pay before payment by these is applied. An invoice and Medicare/Medical Assistance and/or private insurance Explanation of Benefits (EOB) must be submitted to show what the primary (and secondary, if applicable) insurer has paid. TEPP will only allow the total amount billed using MSRP as a guide plus reasonable shipping and handling charges (see “Equipment Pricing”).

Applications Requesting Vouchers Be Sent to An Alternative Location

In instances where a customer wishes to have a voucher sent to a location other than the voucher recipient’s home address, the application must include this request in writing. Such a request must include the signature of the applicant. Vendors completing an on-line application on behalf of a customer must print a copy of the application with such a request and have it signed by the customer. In these cases, a copy of the request must be kept by the vendor for a minimum of three years.

Submitting Online Applications on Behalf of Voucher Recipients

Vendors may submit online applications on behalf of their customers or retail outlets that lack Internet access. In these cases, the vendor must keep on file a copy of the application with the customer’s signature and abide by all applicable non-disclosure, privacy, and HIPPA regulations. This documentation may be requested at any time by the TEPP Administrator and must be provided within a reasonable timeframe.

Filing for Reimbursement

Instructions for filing for reimbursement are listed on the back of the TEPP voucher. Vendors must accurately and thoroughly complete the sections applicable to them. They must also ensure that the voucher is signed and dated.

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The sales receipt/invoice for the equipment purchased must be submitted along with verification of any shipping charges applicable to the sale (see “Equipment Pricing”). The original (not fax copy) of the voucher must be sent to the Universal Service Fund Administrator as listed on the back of the voucher.

In the event that any voucher sections are not completed, correct documentation is not received, non-approved/over-priced equipment is submitted, or voucher/invoices do not tabulate correctly, the voucher and invoice will not be paid and will be returned to the vendor along with an explanation.

All correctly completed invoices and vouchers received by the 20th of the month will be authorized for payment by the end of the month. Checks are generally sent to vendors by the first week of the following month.

TEPP must not be billed until the voucher recipient has received all of the TEPP-covered equipment. Vendors who provide equipment to their customers in violation of these guidelines **do so at their own risk** as the program does not guarantee reimbursement.

Program Controls

Information provided by TEPP program vendors is subject to audit and verification by the PSC and State of Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau. Any attempt to intentionally defraud this program can result in legal action by the State of Wisconsin.

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Acceptance of Vendor Guidelines

Please indicate your receipt and understanding of these guidelines, as well as your agreement to abide by them, by signing and returning this acceptance page to the following address by June 30, 2004. An addressed, postage-paid envelope has been enclosed for your convenience.

Wipfli Young
P.O. Box 8700
Madison, WI 53708-8700

Alternatively, you can fax this page to the USF Administrator at (608) 274-8085.

We have received, understand, and agree to the Vendor Guidelines for the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP).

Company Name

Authorized Representative
Signature

Authorized Representative
Type or Print

Date

Telephone Number

E-Mail Address